

**ENGLISH 287
AMERICAN LITERATURE**

BULLETIN INFORMATION

ENGL 287 - American Literature (3 credit hours)

Credit Description:

An introduction to American literary history, emphasizing the analysis of literary texts, the development of literary traditions over time, the emergence of new genres and forms, and the writing of successful essays about literature. Designed for English majors

Prerequisites: ENGL 101 and 102 or equivalent

SAMPLE COURSE OVERVIEW

This course rapidly surveys a number of representative American writings from the colonial period to the present through a focus on the intertwined themes of love and loss.

ITEMIZED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of English 287, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the US authors taught, their formal, thematic, and social concerns, and their fit within their literary/historical periods.
2. Read and interpret American literature carefully and closely
3. Articulate the role of literary and other creative works in the formation of national identities
4. Define, compare, contrast, justify, and interrogate the major American literary movements covered in class.
5. Engage in meaningful debate about the literary texts we have studied.
6. Demonstrate understanding of and apply an analytical vocabulary to literature.
7. Identify and differentiate among key features of literary texts (e.g., themes, genres, forms, styles, movements)
8. Write effective analytical essays interpreting literary texts.

SAMPLE REQUIRED TEXTS/SUGGESTED READINGS/MATERIALS

1. Foster, *Coquette*
2. Crane, *Maggie*
3. Bechdel, *Fun Home*
4. Substantial collection of readings posted on Blackboard, primarily under "Course Documents"

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS AND/OR EXAM

1. **Reading Assignments:** Be prepared: reading assignments will be heavier on some days than on others. You must always bring the assigned reading(s) with you to class each

day. This means purchasing or borrowing copies of the three novels listed above; the remaining readings can be found on Blackboard (mostly under “Course Documents”) and may be brought to class either in printed form *or* via a laptop.

2. **Writing Assignments:** Bring pens and notebook paper to class each day and bring pens and blue books to exams. Quizzes, if administered, will be short and factual, asking you to recall what you read.
 - a. **Close Reading:** Over the course of the semester you will need to perform one close reading of *a few lines or a stanza* of any poem on our syllabus. (See Blackboard under “Course Information” for close reading as well as metrical guidelines.) You can choose any section/stanza from any of the poems on our syllabus. If you read closely enough, *attending to both form and content*, you should have much to say about even a few lines of poetry. Prepare these papers on a computer with standard margins, spacing and fonts. You must submit your close reading (2-3 pp.) to “Assignments” on Blackboard (where it will be screened for plagiarism) *prior to the beginning* of the class in which we discuss your chosen poet.
 - b. **Comparative Paper:** Choose one pre-midterm and one post-midterm work from the syllabus and compare and contrast the two by examining how they both treat the themes of love and loss. Develop a thesis about how the two works compare and/or differ, and then support that thesis through compelling analysis and persuasive textual evidence. You must submit this paper (3-4 pp.) to “Assignments” on Blackboard (where it will be screened for plagiarism)
3. **Group Project- Love Song Analysis:** For this presentation, the class will be divided into several groups. Each group will choose a contemporary American love song, play it for us, and analyze it closely on the level of both form and content. No written component required. *One Caveat: as a means of ensuring lyrical complexity, all songs must be chosen from NPR’s “All Songs Considered” <http://www.npr.org/programs/asc> (also accessible via Blackboard: External Links) unless approved by me.*
4. **Exams:** You will take both a midterm and a cumulative final exam, each consisting of some combination of quote identification, close reading, and/or short answer, comparative questions.

SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE WITH TIMELINE OF TOPICS, READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS/PROJECTS

Week 1: Love, American Style
Overview

Week 2: Puritan Love
Bradstreet

Week 3: Romance in the Age of Reason

Foster, *The Coquette*

- Week 4:** Poe and Women
"The Raven," "To Helen," "Annabel Lee"
Hawthorne and Women
"The Birthmark"; "Rappacini's Daughter"
- Week 5:** Maternal Love and Loss
Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, concluding remarks;
Jacobs, selected chapters from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
- Week 6:** "I am he that aches with *amorous* love"
Walt Whitman, selected poems
- Week 7:** Wild Nights
Emily Dickinson, selected poems; Higginson on her letters
Love Squandered
Howells, "Editha"
- Week 8:** The Wife's Story
Chopin, "Story of an Hour," "At the 'Cadian Ball," and "The Storm"; Gilman, "The Yellow Wall-Paper," and "Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper"
- Week 9:** Lovelessness
Stephen Crane, *Maggie*
Review for Midterm
- Week 10:** Midterm
- Week 11:** Modern Love
Fitzgerald, "Babylon Revisited";
Hemingway, "Snows of Kilimanjaro"
- Week 12:** Poems of Love and Longing
Eliot, "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock";
Hughes, selected poems

Love of the Past/Passed
Finish Hughes; Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily"
- Week 13:** For Better or For Worse
Sylvia Plath and Donald Hall, selected poems
Love and Lies
Bechdel, *Fun Home*

Week 14: Love Songs
Springsteen; begin presentations
Comparative Paper due

Week 15: Love Songs and Wrap-Up
Finish song presentations; exam prep and summary

Final Exam according to university schedule